

KINGS AND HELOTS

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The numerous valuable studies that have appeared in the last two or three decades have contributed much to our knowledge of the Spartan kings and helots. These studies have generally treated both groups as distinct members of Spartan society, in separate discussions¹. There is, however, a moderate amount of evidence that links the kings and the helots in a special manner. A close examination of this evidence, such as it is, may allow certain conclusions which cast some new light on the relationship of both groups with one another. Given the nature of our information about all things Spartan, some of these conclusions will have to remain more or less hypothetical.

We may begin with a brief survey of what is known about the origin and ethnic affiliation of the helots. The helots were the native inhabitants of the land called Laconia. The thesis that the majority of all helots were Messenians cannot be upheld; for Thucydides the helots were the Laconian helots². With regard to race or ethnicity the helots were Greeks: in explaining

¹ E.g.: CARTLEDGE P. *Spartan Reflections*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2001; IDEM. *Sparta and Lakonia*.² L., N.Y., 2002; CARTLEDGE P. and SPAWFORTH A. *Hellenistic and Roman Sparta*.² L., N.Y., 2002; CLAUS M. *Sparta*. München, 1983; DUCAT J. *Les Hilotes*. Paris, 1990; HODKINSON S. *Property and Wealth in Classical Sparta*. Classical Press of Wales, 2000; *The Shadow of Sparta*. Ed. by Powell A. and Hodkinson S. L. and N.Y., 1994; *Sparta New Perspectives*. Ed. by Hodkinson S. and Powell A. Classical Press of Wales, 1999; LAZENBY J.F. *The Spartan Army*. Warminster, 1985. I wish to express my gratitude to Andrei U. Eremin who read this paper in typescript and offered very helpful suggestions and criticism which greatly improved the article.

² LURAGHI N. *Helots Called Messenians? A Note on Thuc. I.101.2* // CQ. 2000. Vol. 52. P. 591. If I understand him aright, Figueira (FIGUEIRA T. *The Evolution of Messenian Identity* // *Sparta New Perspectives*. Ed. by Hodkinson S. and Powell A. Classical Press of Wales, 1999. P. 215 sq.) also distinguishes between Laconian and Messenian helots. He believes that Thucydides looks at the Messenians from two perspectives, as "Messenians" when they are on

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who should ideally work as farmers Aristotle says that agricultural laborers should be slaves, as at Sparta, but they should not be of the same stock (*ὁμόφυλοι*), which they were in Sparta, because as Greeks such slaves would be men of spirit and therefore dangerous. From the point of view of history and chronology the ancestors of the helots were the Proto-Greeks living in the Bronze Age: Athenaeus quotes Theopompus as saying that the Spartans took their helot population from the Greeks who had inhabited the land before the Spartans, i.e. from the Proto-Greek population. As regards language, researchers have proved the presence of Proto-Greek formations in the epigraphical evidence for the cults practiced by the historical helots. This indicates that some features of the cults belonging to the historical helots were remnants of the Bronze Age religion. It is not impossible that the helots' everyday talk in the fifth century still contained Linear B words. The thesis of an Achaean helot descent, based on the testimony mentioned above and on linguistic research, has been generally accepted³.

Ephorus says that an early Spartan king, Agis I, created the institution of helotry. The historicity of this information has been doubted⁴, almost certainly with good reason, but here it is not so much the historical truth

the side of Athens; as "helots," when seen in their social milieu, a useful distinction at least as far the understanding of Thucydides is concerned.

³ Athen. 6. 265b-c = FgrHist 115 Theopomp. F 122. Arist. *Pol.* VII.10.1330a25-30; II.6.1.1269a29-169b12. For references to studies of pre-Doric elements in the language of the helots see: LOTZE D. *Metaxy eleutheron kai doulon. Studien zur Rechtsstellung unfreier Landbevölkerungen in Griechenland bis zum 4. Jh. v. Chr.* Wiesbaden, 1979. S. 26-28; 71-79. See further: MICHELL H. *Sparta*. Cambridge, 1952. P. 76 ff.; CLAUS. *Op. cit.* S. 109 f. CARTLEDGE. *Sparta and Lakonia*. P. 82-87 voices some skepticism but accepts the Achaean descent of the helots. Ephorus FgrHist 70 F 117 says that at the arrival of the Spartans the Achaeans left Laconia, but he undermines his credibility in this, when he asserts the same of the Eleans, in which he is demonstrably mistaken. Theopompus' testimony has therefore been preferred by all; cf. Lotze, loc. cit. Despite his error, Ephorus agrees with Theopompus to the extent that Achaeans lived in the later Lacedaemon, and that a change in their fortunes occurred when the Spartans arrived. Luraghi (LURAGHI N. *Helotic Slavery Reconsidered // Sparta. Beyond the Mirage*. Ed. by Powell A. and Hodkinson S. The Classical Press of Wales, 2002. P. 227) following DUCAT (*Op. cit.* P. 181 f.) advances a new theory of his own and claims that there is little support in the evidence for an Achaean origin of the helots. He completely ignores the Theopompus fragment which is explicit and unambiguous, and which can hardly be made to mean anything else than that the helots were the descendants of the Achaeans. Surely a straightforward piece of ancient evidence such as this is preferable to a modern theory, no matter how acutely argued.

⁴ FgrHist 70 Ephor. F 117. Kiechle (KIECHLE F. *Agis // Der kleine Pauly*. 1964) calls Ephorus' report unhistorical and a later invention.

that is important. What matters is that Ephorus recorded a Spartan tradition, whether true or not, that Agis I was the originator of helotry. Other links between the kings and the helots are present in fifth-century and later sources. According to Herodotus it was compulsory for the helots to attend the funeral of a king. This mandatory inclusion is surely remarkable; it has led Kiechle to surmise that the helots' relationship with the kings in earlier times was of a quite different sort than their later relationship with the representatives of the Spartan citizen body, by which he evidently means the ephors and the *gerousia*, and that the earlier condition of the helots was better than it was in the classical period. His conjectures, in support of which Kiechle cites a similar opinion of J.J. Wells, would seem to be right on the mark⁵.

Against this background, the dealings of the ephors with the helots about which we have information were uniformly either repressive or punitive. The *gerousia*, too, is not known for having had a benign attitude towards the subjected class, nor is there any record of their having improved the helots' condition or having advocated such an improvement. Although occasional closer ties between individuals of both classes are recorded, the relationship between the Spartan *homoioi* as a whole and helots was sometimes one of mistrust; there were occasions when Spartan hoplites had to take precautions against them in the field⁶.

In contrast, as will be shown in greater detail in the following paragraphs, a king could take personal charge of the helots, helots could serve as the personal bodyguards and confidants of royal persons, and, if some recent writers are right, kings or their surrogates could advocate the liberation of deserving helots.

The closest and most regular contact between the two was in the army during military operations abroad. If we are to believe the travel writer Pausanias, helots fought in Sparta's armies as early as the first and second Messenian Wars. Pausanias adds that it was the poet Tyrtaeus who enrolled helots in the regiments to replace the fallen Spartans⁷. What is more certain is that from that time onwards until the end of the third century B.C. we encounter helots or newly liberated citizen helots (*neodamodeis*) in the expeditionary forces and on the battlefields of Sparta. They served in the army in various capacities on at least twenty-seven separate occasions for which there is good evidence, and on many more where their service may safely be assumed. In some of these campaigns the entire Spartan force consisted of helots or *neodamodeis* or both⁸.

⁵ Hdt. VI.58; KIECHLE F. *Lakonien und Sparta*. München, Berlin, 1963. S. 160 f.

⁶ E.g.: Thuc. IV.80.2; Critias. *Fr.* 37 (DK); but see: DUCAT. *Op. cit.* P. 146 f.

⁷ Paus. IV.11.1; 16.6.

⁸ See: WELWEI K.-W. *Unfreie im antiken Kriegsdienst I: Athen und Sparta*. Wiesbaden, 1974. S. 108–192 *passim* and LAZENBY. *Op. cit.* *passim* who be

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War by its nature tends to create a bond between commanders and their troops; this is true to a certain extent even in the huge armies of modern times. In antiquity the bond was created by the proximity in which both lived and fought, but much more because both must depend on each other for survival. The commander had to look out for all his soldiers, no matter how lowly their social class might be, if he hoped to be victorious. The soldiers, for their part, owed him loyalty, obedience, and the readiness to fight courageously and well. The bond created by this enforced reciprocity was present to some extent even in the case of mercenaries.

The helots, however, were not mercenaries. They were a part of Spartan society in which they had a stake, no matter how abused they may have been by their Spartan masters. The kings, and eventually the commoners who began to command them in the later fifth century, established a close contact with them while in the field, both on an official and on a personal level. The closeness between kings and helots is best attested for the early fifth century. The evidence for that period led K.O.Müller to observe that the kings appear to have had a greater and more direct authority over the helots in the army than over the rest of the troops under their command⁹. Herodotus certainly gives this impression in his reports about Cleomenes I; it is also certain that in later times too the kings continued to exercise direct command over the helots, as they did over all other formations of the army¹⁰.

During the Spartan campaign against Argos Cleomenes I added to his previous acts of impiety by giving orders to the helots that violated the religious sensibilities of the Greeks in general, and those of the Spartans in particular. When the Argives whom he had defeated fled to the grove sacred to Argos, the eponymous hero of the land, Cleomenes ordered the helots in his army to pile wood around the grove and to set it on fire¹¹. He thus committed two acts of sacrilege at one and the same time. It was sacrilegious to destroy trees sacred to a deity: numerous 'sacred laws' impose penalties for harming the vegetation in sanctuaries¹². Secondly,

tween them have collected all the passages in the sources recording the presence of helots and *neodamodeis* in the army. Helots and *neodamodeis* alone: e.g. Thuc. VII.19.3; Xen. *Hell.* III.4.2; VI.5.24.

⁹ MÜLLER K.O. *Geschichte hellenischer Stämme und Städte*. Graz, 1969. Vol. II, III. S. 33.

¹⁰ CARTLEDGE. *Spartan Reflections*. P. 61.

¹¹ Hdt. VI.80.

¹² JORDAN B. and PERLIN J. *On the Protection of Sacred Groves* // GRBS Monographs. 1984. Vol. 10. P. 153–159. Herodotus (VI.75.3; VI.84.1) reports an Argive and a Spartan explanation of Cleomenes' madness and wretched end. According to the former both were punishment for the atrocities he committed in the sacred grove. The Spartans attributed them to Cleomenes' drinking undiluted wine. Why the pious Spartans for once preferred a secu-

Cleomenes was guilty of the murder of the suppliants standing under the protection of a divinity. Cleomenes, Herodotus continues, next sent a large part of his army back to Sparta, retaining only 1,000 of his troops and all the helots. With these he proceeded to the Argive Heraeum intending to offer sacrifice. When the priest refused to give him permission, Cleomenes ordered the helots to drag the priest from the altar and to flog him¹³.

The helots cannot but have been fully aware of the sacrilegious nature of the king's commands. There is no doubt at all that they possessed a developed religious sensibility: they worshipped Poseidon at Taenarum, a sanctuary peculiarly, although not exclusively, their own, they participated in the celebration of the Hyacinthia, and they were present at the funeral rites for the kings¹⁴. Nevertheless, they obeyed the atrocious orders of Cleomenes to the letter, promptly, and without demurring. That it was not impossible for them to remonstrate, at least initially, is suggested by the refusal of the helot, who later stood guard over Cleomenes in the stocks, to give the king a knife. The guard finally obeyed, but only when Cleomenes threatened to punish him severely after his release¹⁵.

These episodes tell us something about the fidelity and obedience that helots rendered to a king of Sparta, at least in the earlier part of the fifth century. A notice in a lexicographer very likely makes reference to the helots who obeyed Cleomenes in this episode and burned the grove of Argos: 'Argeioi: the trustworthy of the helots were called Argeioi'¹⁶.

Cleomenes of course had always been somewhat strange in the head, and, as his terrible suicide shows, was quite mad at the end of his life. He did, however, have his lucid periods. It was during one of these that he made the 'characteristically Spartan' observation that Homer was the poet of the Spartans because he teaches men how to fight, but Hesiod was the poet of the helots because he tells them how to farm¹⁷. If there is any truth to this anecdote, it shows that a Spartan king could regard the helots not merely as farm laborers and soldiers to be exploited, but as human beings having a not inconsiderable mental capacity and worthy of the sympathetic reflection and characterization by a king. The episode also suggests that the helots had a far greater share in Spartan and Greek culture than has been supposed¹⁸.

lar to a supernatural explanation is an interesting question.

¹³ Hdt. VI.81.

¹⁴ Taenarum: Thuc. I.128.1; Hyacinthia: Athen. IV. 139 sqq.; royal funerals: Hdt. VI.58.3. cf.: DUCAT. Op. cit. P. 118.

¹⁵ Hdt. VI.72.2.

¹⁶ Hesych. *Lex.* s. v. 'Ἀργεῖοι.

¹⁷ Aelian. *VH.* XIII.19; Plut. *Mor.* 223a.

¹⁸ The helots apparently knew the *Iliad*, too. They express the wish to eat the Spartans raw at Xen. *Hell.* III.3.6, which is a close echo of *Il.* IV.34. Cf.: HORNBLLOWER S. *The Greek World 479–323 B.C.* L., N.Y., 1991. P. 100.

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The casual manner in which Herodotus reports that it was a helot who watched Cleomenes tied up in the stocks suggests that helots routinely provided body guards for the kings when the latter were not on campaign. Another instance of helots acting as the body guards of a royal person is present in the report of Herodotus about Cleomenes' colleague and enemy Demaratus. When the pursuing Spartans caught up with the fugitive former king on the island of Zacynthus, they took away his *therapontes*, who were his helot body guard, and then arrested him¹⁹.

Several respectable scholars maintain that at the time of the battle of Marathon or very shortly before it Cleomenes made common cause with the helots and attempted to stir them into rebellion by way of advancing his own ambitious plans. There appears to be no direct support for his soliciting the helots in the sources, and the thesis has been challenged by several historians²⁰. One skeptical authority has argued that the Spartans would not have allowed a helot to guard Cleomenes if they had suspected him of plotting with the helots²¹. But by the time the king was in the stocks he was too demented to conspire with anybody; the helot most probably was posted at his side to prevent something of the kind that actually occurred. If Cleomenes did in fact attempt a *coup d'état*, it is quite likely that he involved the helots in it; everything in his career and character, as well as his attitude towards the helots points in that direction²².

There is no such uncertainty in the case of the next royal person of ability and ambition, the regent Pausanias, who also had revolutionary plans in which he involved the helots. When the defeated Persians abandoned the battlefield of Plataea they left behind a huge amount of treasure: gold and silver, implements and furniture, women and animals. It was enough to pay for three expensive dedications, and to distribute awards to the thousands of soldiers who fought in the battle²³. In Greek warfare captured property became the spoils of the victors who collected it for sale at auction or for some other appropriate disposition. In the Spartan army the booty was brought to the booty sellers (*λαφυροπώλαι*) who were magistrates attached to the staff of the king; they took charge of the collected spoils and arranged for the sale²⁴.

¹⁹ Hdt. VI.70.2; for the *therapontes* being helots see: How and Wells II on IX.28.2.

²⁰ The most detailed and extensive case for Cleomenes' plotting with the helots is that made by HUXLEY GL. *Early Sparta*. Cambridge, Mass., 1962. P. 87–96. A critical discussion of the views of scholars who have argued this point both pro and con may be found in OLIVA P. *Sparta and her Social Problems*. Amsterdam, Prague, 1971. P. 146 f.

²¹ OLIVA. Op. cit. P. 147.

²² Cf.: HORNBLOWER. Op. cit. P. 21.

²³ Hdt. IX.80 sq.

²⁴ Xen. *Lac.* 13.11; *Agesil.* I.18 f.; cf.: PRITCHETT W.K. *Ancient Greek Military*

As commander-in-chief of the Greeks at Plataea Pausanias did not follow the normal procedure in the matter of the booty. He issued a proclamation that no one was to touch it, and then ordered the helots in the Spartan army to collect it. The helots collected the booty, handing over much of it, but also stealing what apparently was an equal amount. Herodotus says that they stole everything that they could hide. It is unlikely that all of the thousands of helots present at Plataea participated in the collecting and stealing. Nevertheless the value of what they stole must have been enormous. Herodotus claims that when the helots sold the stolen treasure to the Aeginetans, who paid for it with brass, the gold became the foundation of the later great wealth of the island²⁵. This origin of Aegina's prosperity is regarded by commentators as a scandalous and malicious invention of the island's arch enemy, Athens²⁶. That it contains invention is plausible enough; all the same, as with most exaggerations, there is probably a large kernel of truth in it. Macan rightly observes that in selling to Aegina the thieving helots sold cheap, not because they did not know the difference between gold and brass, but because they had to get rid of the stolen goods as quickly as possible²⁷. In any case it should not be in doubt that the value of the loot that the helots stole was considerable.

It is most unlikely that a theft on such a large scale, perpetrated by so many persons, and followed by the sale of so many valuable objects to a sovereign state could have remained undetected for very long. Eventually it became common knowledge; this is shown by the fact that Herodotus' informants learned about it later. It is still more improbable that Pausanias himself did not hear about the theft and sale at some point. Yet he took no steps to recover the booty and did nothing to punish the thieves. His failure to take action against them is that much more remarkable because the helots acquired much of their loot by stripping the Persian corpses of their chains, bracelets, and gilded daggers, a practice which according to Aelian was strictly forbidden to 'Laconian men'²⁸.

The regent's inaction may have been a sign of approval, perhaps even a silent compliment to the helots, for the efficiency with which they put to use a skill regarded by the Spartans almost as a virtue. The helots

Practices. Part I. Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1971. P. 90.

²⁵ Hdt. IX.80 sq.

²⁶ E.g. by HOW AND WELLS 1989 *ad loc.*

²⁷ MACAN R.W. Herodotus. The Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Books. L., 1908 *ad loc.*

²⁸ Aelian. *VH* VI.6. Under the regime of austerity the acquisition of ostentatious wealth was prohibited upon; in view of this fact there is no reason to doubt the veracity of Aelian's statement. If the Spartans were forbidden to strip the dead, it would be odd if the helots were permitted to do it.

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stole well for they were not caught in the act; and good stealing for the Spartans was good work deserving a reward. In the *Anabasis* Xenophon says to Cheirisophus:

For as I hear, Cheirisophus, you Lacedaemonians, at least those among you who belong to the peers, practice stealing from childhood, and count it not disgraceful but honorable to steal anything that the law does not prevent you from taking²⁹.

Whether or not with his inaction Pausanias wished to honor the Spartan tradition of stealing and to commend the helot practitioners of the art, he certainly was giving them a signal that they had nothing to fear and would be spared any punishment. Pausanias, however, may have had a much weightier and more serious motive, which was to earn the gratitude and good will and thus the help and cooperation of the helots. In the fourth century Agesilaos II, while campaigning in Asia Minor, employed the same tactic to win the loyalty of his friends and allies, to ensure their cooperation, and to bind them closely to himself. Xenophon relates that the booty that Agesilaos captured was so large that it was selling for next to nothing at auction. Agesilaos therefore advised his friends to buy, telling them that soon he would be taking his army down to the coast, where they could resell the goods at a profit. The friends followed his advice and made large amounts of money at the resale. On this occasion the booty sellers took part in the transactions; later on, Agesilaos allowed his friends and allies to seize and sell the plunder directly without intermediaries. In this way, Xenophon concludes, the king acquired many followers eager for his friendship³⁰.

It is virtually certain, therefore, that in showing himself tolerant and forgiving at Plataea Pausanias had more in mind than recognizing the helots' skill. He was taking a deliberate first step to secure the cooperation of the helots in his plans to make himself master of Greece at some time in the not-too-distant future. That this is what he had in mind is supported by the fact that his efforts to ingratiate himself with the helots paralleled his efforts a little later on to gain the support of the Persians for his ambitious schemes.

Less than a year after the battle of Plataea Pausanias captured Byzantium and began his campaign to win over the Persians to his plans which included giving the Great King Greece itself; as at Plataea, the regent was giving things away. When he was recalled to Sparta in 478/77 B.C., the ephors' allegations against him were at first collaboration with the Persians and tyrannical ambitions³¹. Gradually, however, the ephors

²⁹ Xen. *An.* IV.6.15 (Loeb translation); cf. Xen. *Lac.* 2.7 sq.

³⁰ Xen. *Agesil.* I.18 sq.

³¹ Thuc. I.94.2; 95.3; 5; 128.3–7; 129; 131.1; 132.4.

began to discover that Pausanias was plotting with the helots as well³². Having earned their loyalty at Plataea with his paternalistic treatment of them he now proceeded to enlist their active participation in his plans by promising them freedom and citizenship in return for helping in their realization. This, Thucydides says, was a fact³³. The regent's machinations paid off; the helots believed his promises. A good indication of his close collaboration with them is the place where Pausanias was finally betrayed, the sanctuary of Poseidon at Taenarum. The precinct was the principal place of worship of the helots, and it also served as their place of refuge from persecution. Evidently the ephors had learned that Pausanias was in the habit of meeting with his helot allies at Taenarum and so they set their trap there. They arranged for the meeting with Pausanias' confidant and messenger, a 'man from Argilos,' to take place in the sanctuary so as not to arouse the suspicions of the regent. It has always been assumed that Pausanias' friend came from the town called Argilus in eastern Macedonia. But since he met his master in Poseidon's sanctuary at Taenarum, there is a high probability that the man was a Laconian helot. A Laconian inscription containing a sacred law from the early fifth century mentions an *obe* named Arkalia or Argalia; it lay close to Amyclae and Sparta-town. It is more than likely that not knowing the name of the obscure Spartan *obe*, the copyist of Thucydides' text remembered the name of the much better known city in Macedonia, which Thucydides mentions several times, along with its inhabitants, the Argilioi³⁴, and changed the alpha in the name to an iota, turning Pausanias' helot into a man from Argilus. The name of the *obe* may also have had the variant Argilia, to judge from Argileonis, the name of Brasidas' mother. In short, the man was not from the north, but came from a local *obe* and was a helot³⁵. Meeting his confidant in the usual place, Pausanias for his part felt as secure in the interview with him as he had on previous occasions³⁶.

The proposal made a long time ago to connect the machinations of the regent Pausanias with the great revolt in 465 B. C. is in all likelihood correct³⁷. The promises of Pausanias to the helots remained unfulfilled, causing lingering resentment which led to the uprising. In its aftermath

³² Note the imperfect ἐπειγάνοντο at I.132.4.

³³ Thuc. I.132.4.

³⁴ Thuc. IV.103.3; V.6.5; 18.5.

³⁵ Thuc. I.132.5–133. See BEATTIE A.J. An Early Laconian Lex Sacra // CQ. 1951. Vol. 1. P. 49–58; PORALLA P. and BRADFORD A.S. A Prosopography of Lacedaemonians.2 Chicago, 1985. P. 25, № 110; FRASER P.M. and MATTHEWS E. A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names. III. A. Oxf., 1997. s. n.

³⁶ Thuc. I.128.1 shows that helots congregated in the sanctuary at Taenarum, in this case as suppliants.

³⁷ See the references to, and discussion of, this proposal in OLIVA. Op. cit. P. 151.

the relations between the Spartans and their helots worsened considerably³⁸. It is certainly to the period of mistrust after the great revolt that Thucydides refers when he says that a great concern of the Spartans always was to be safe from the helots. This concern surely is also the cause for the disappearance of the 2,000 helots that the historian reports. Whatever else we may make of the episode, what Thucydides says about them implies that these helots had proved to be brave and able fighters, who had a high opinion of themselves and of their accomplishments, for which they expected to receive proper recognition. These qualities and expectations were in fact the reason for their liquidation³⁹.

We are not told who commanded the 2,000 and in what battle. Thucydides, who usually reports only the bare facts of the commander's name, the makeup of the army, and the name of the locality of the battle, is completely silent in this case. Also absent from the sources, with a very few exceptions, are reports of a personal touch and an interaction of the kings with the helots similar to those practiced by Cleomenes and Pausanias in the previous period. The absence of such reports is probably to be explained by the different principles in the selection of facts adopted by Thucydides; that he has no details of king-helot relations during the Peloponnesian War does not necessarily mean that such relations did not exist.

It is however a fact that the first Spartan king after the regent Pausanias who had dealings with the helots fought not together with them, but against them. He was Archidamus II who suppressed the revolt of 465 B.C.⁴⁰. Helots must have served regularly under his command during the periodic invasions of Attica in the early part of the Peloponnesian War named after him, and it has been rightly assumed that helots must have been called up for service on many other occasions during the war⁴¹. Agis II had helots with him in the battle of Mantinea, and so did Agesilaos in the fourth century⁴².

There is some reason to believe that in the second half of the fifth century, perhaps beginning with the Peloponnesian War, the Spartans adopted a new policy with regard to the military service of the helots, which may have contributed to the absence of reports about collaboration

³⁸ Plut. *Lyc.* 28.6.

³⁹ Thuc. IV.80.2–5; see the discussion in the notes of HORNBLLOWER S. A Commentary on Thucydides. Oxf., 1996. Vol. II ad loc.

⁴⁰ Diod. Sic. XI.63.1–7.

⁴¹ LAZENBY. Op. cit. P. 59. The capacity in which they served is a subject of debate; see: WELWEI. Op. cit. P. 110. Different from Lazenby, who I believe is right, Welwei tends to minimize service as hoplites; the helots, he thinks, served mainly as auxiliaries and batmen.

⁴² Thuc. V.57.1; 64.2; Xen. *Hell.* III.4.2.

between kings and helots. The new policy consisted of two changes which appear to have been introduced in order to increase the safety of the Spartans from revolts.

The first change, observable during the Peloponnesian War, was to appoint with gradually increasing frequency commoners, rather than kings, as commanders of army units containing helots or former helots. The most notable example of this innovation is Brasidas in 424 B.C.⁴³. In 413 B.C. the commoner Ekkritos commanded a force sailing to Sicily, while in 409 B.C. the commander defending Byzantium was Clearchus. Another commoner, Thibron, held command in Asia Minor. Other non-royal commanders of helots in the fourth century were Eudamidas, Ischolaos, and Lysander⁴⁴.

The explanation of this change is to be sought, first of all, in the need for more than two field commanders in the course of a prolonged war, fought on several fronts. As the kings could not be everywhere, officers of lesser rank came to command garrisons and territories of varying sizes abroad. Smaller army units did not require commanders of high rank, such as a king. In 413 B.C., for example, Agis II appointed two lower-grade officers to command ca. 300 *neodamodeis* on Euboea. After the war Sparta, the 'super power' of the time, had to defend interests and positions in many places of the Greek world with detachments similar to that on Euboea⁴⁵, which required a still larger numbers of lower-grade commanders.

Whatever the reasons for it may have been, the shift in commanders had the effect of removing the kings, whose authority in the field was formidable⁴⁶, from the command of helots as much as possible and so deprived them of opportunities to court and win the helots for their schemes as Pausanias had done at Plataea. From now on, his example became more and more difficult to follow.

During the first decade of the Peloponnesian War the Spartans received yet another powerful reminder of the need to prevent the association of royal commanders and helot troops and so to forestall any potential for trouble. This was the example provided to them by Brasidas and his helot hoplites. The strength of the bond that this able and charismatic general could forge with his soldiers, regardless of their social class, is evident from the name by which they came to be called, the soldiers of Brasidas, *Brasideioi*⁴⁷. The name shows how closely these helots came to be identified

⁴³ Thuc. IV.78.1; 78.4; V.34.1; 67.1; 71.3; 72.3.

⁴⁴ Eccritus: Thuc. VII.19.2; Clearchus: Xen. *Hell.* I.3.15; Thibron: Xen. *Hell.* III.1.4; Eudamidas: Xen. *Hell.* V.2.24; Ischoalus: Xen. *Hell.* VI.5.24; Lysander: Aelian. *VH.* XIII.19.

⁴⁵ Thuc. VIII.5.1.

⁴⁶ Hdt. VI.56.

⁴⁷ Thuc. V.34.1.

with a commander who had earned the respect and allegiance of his army, both free and unfree. Brasidas was not of royal stock, but he belonged to the high nobility and functioned, so to speak, as a surrogate king. The honorific appellation *Brasidaeioi* parallels the *Argeioi* of Cleomenes I; both express the mutual reliability and solidarity between a general and his troops. According to Thucydides the Spartans decided to give the *Brasidaeioi* freedom and permission to live wherever they liked. Somewhat later they settled them at Lepreon, on the border of Elis, which Sparta disputed with Elis. The historian adds that Brasidas' helots were to live alongside other liberated helots, whom he had not mentioned earlier. Besides the liberated helots already present, however, Lepreon and its vicinity, being on the periphery of Laconia, were also inhabited by *perioikoi*. This raises the question what lands were given to the settlers, whose number was substantial. We may take it for granted that neither the new nor the old *neodamodeis* displaced any of the *perioikoi*. The answer therefore may be that the *Brasidaeioi* settled and worked on lands owned by the kings, to whom, as Xenophon informs us, the Lycurgan constitution assigned choice farm country in the outlying regions among the *perioikoi*⁴⁸. If the thesis of helot veterans settling in royal domains is correct, it reveals routine connections and associations between the Spartan kings and masses of helots outside of service in the army. Helots in small numbers worked the land of all Spartans, but it was only the kings with whom large groups of helot farm workers stood in relationships of mutual interest in peace time as they had in war.

The sources afford a second and more persuasive piece of evidence that, as the Peloponnesian war continued, the change in command was, among other things, also a precautionary measure against royal plots. Where the sources state the composition of military forces, the helots begin to be replaced as hoplites by *neodamodeis*. The expeditionary force to Sicily under Ekkritos in 413 B.C. appears to be the last contingent in which unfree helots served as hoplites, along with *neodamodeis*. The force

⁴⁸ Xen. *Lac.* 15.3. Lepreum: Thuc. V.31.1; 34.1; 49 sq.; 62. As *neodamodeis* means new citizens, the helots clearly acquired some sort of citizenship. Andrewes (HCT IV on Thuc. V.34.1) denies that the freed helots became full citizens, without explaining just what he means by a full citizen. He is incorrect in saying that the service of the 2000 vanished helots (Thuc. IV.80.3 sq.) was not necessarily hoplite service. Everything that Thucydides says about them suggests that they fought as hoplites; cf.: JORDAN B. The Ceremony of the Helots in Thucydides // *L'Antiquité Classique*. 1990. Vol. 59. P. 56–60.

⁴⁹ Xen. *Hell.* III.4.2 (*neodamodeis* with Agesilaos to Asia); *Hell.* VI.5.24 f. (troops on the border); *Hell.* VI.5.28 sq. (promise of freedom). See also Xen. *Hell.* V.2.24; Diod. Sic. XV.65.6.

⁵⁰ Thuc. IV.41.3; V.14.3; 35.7; VII.26.2.

sent to Euboea in 413 B.C. consisted of *neodamodeis*, as did the force in Byzantium in 403 B.C. In 400/399 B.C. Thibron had 1,000 *neodamodeis* with him, while in 396 B.C. Agesilaos commanded 2,000 of them in Asia Minor. The troops guarding the borders of Sparta in 370 B.C. were *neodamodeis*, and when the Thebans threatened to invade Sparta in the same year, the helots were promised freedom for defending the country before the battle, rather than after it⁴⁹. One important purpose of this promise and of the new policy in general very likely was to secure the loyalty of the helots by giving them a stake in the free community, although we do not hear of massive helot desertions from the ranks of the army in the field under the command of a king or commoner. The desertions that took place when Athenians forces invaded Spartan territory from the sea during the Peloponnesian war appear to have been members of the civilian working force, farmers, laborers, and the like⁵⁰.

Another aim of the new system evidently was to remove the bargaining chips of freedom and emancipation from the hands of the kings. Employing liberated helots became the regular practice and was widely and well known as such. In 374 B.C. Polydamas of Pharsalus addressing the Spartan assembly took it for granted that if the Spartans should be at all willing to render assistance, they would send an army of *neodamodeis* under the command of a commoner rather than of a king, and he argued against it:

And I believe that if you send a force such as shall seem not only to me, but also to the rest of the Thessalians, large enough to make war upon Jason, the cities will revolt from him; for all of them are afraid of the lengths to which the man's power will go. But if you imagine that *neodamodeis* and a private individual (i.e. not a king) as commander will suffice, I advise you to do nothing⁵¹.

Sparta's new policy, then, consisted of two features which reinforced each other. Removing as much as possible the kings from command of larger helot units also removed the possibility of plots. Freeing the helots first, on the other hand, gave them less reason to conspire with the kings and to assist them in their revolutionary plans in return for gaining in the future what they already possessed at present.

We next hear about a personal touch in the relations between kings and helots in an anecdote related by Aelian. It concerns Agesilaos II, who accepted a gift of ordinary foodstuffs, but declined an offer of sweets, pastries, and perfume as unfit for a Spartan. When pressed to accept

⁵¹ Xen. *Hell.* VI.1.14. Cf.: HORNBLOWER. *The Greek World*. P. 21, who thinks that Spartans with political influence wanted to free a number of helots, so as to have extra manpower for the army: 'King Kleomenes, Pausanias the Regent and the late fifth-century general Brasidas all had plans of this kind.'

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these delicacies, Agesilaos asked that they be given to the helots, for it was better to corrupt them than Spartans and their kings⁵². Agesilaos' request has been interpreted as an example of the contempt with which the Spartans always treated the helots⁵³. Agesilaos may have intended to convey some contempt, but his remark sounds good-natured; after all giving someone fine food cannot be said to be very insulting, especially when the quality of Spartan army rations is taken into account⁵⁴. The statement may also be viewed as a display of the self-discipline and will-power of the Spartans and their kings, qualities in which both took great pride. On the other hand, we may also interpret it as approving and complimentary, for that the helots could be corrupted, implies that they were as sound as the Spartans themselves to begin with.

It is interesting that the same story was told about Lysander, who was Agesilaos' ally in the succession crisis of 400 B.C. Agesilaos contested the succession to the throne of his brother Agis with Agis' son Leotychides who was reputed to be the son of Alcibiades and so ineligible⁵⁵. According to Duris of Samos Timaea, the widow of Agis II, whispered to her helot maids at home that the name of her child was Alcibiades, thereby telling the maids that the real father of Leotychides was the famous Alcibiades. Here is yet another instance not just of a personal, but even of an intimate relationship between a royal person and her helots. Timaea may have had close friends and confidantes among the wives and women from the Spartiate class, but no source says that she did. In any case she had no hesitation to reveal the true paternity of her child to her helot servants. It is not impossible too, that the maids spread this information to others, so that Timaea wittingly or unwittingly intervened in the struggle for succession to the detriment of her own son, for Leotychides was denied the throne of his nominal father⁵⁶. By an odd coincidence it was a king of the same name, Leotychides II, who provoked Demaratus to ask his mother, the widow of king Ariston about his true parentage and to deny the allegation by Leotychides that she had had an affair with a muleteer, who, as a servant in the house, must be a helot. The value of this story in Herodotus is amply discussed and rightly questioned by the standard commentators; still, its existence supports the view of an easy familiarity of the monarchs with their helot servants⁵⁷.

⁵² FgrHist 115 Theopomp. F22=Athen. XIV.657b-c; Plut. *Agesil.* 36.6=*Mor.* 210b-c.

⁵³ By DUCAT J. *Le mépris des Hilotes* // *Annales*. 1974. Vol. 30. P. 1451–1464. *passim*; IDEM. *Les Hilotes*. P. 10. Ducat tends to explain far too much in the relations between Spartans and helots as Spartan contempt for the latter.

⁵⁴ Spartan army rations: LAZENBY. *The Spartan Army*. P. 34.

⁵⁵ *Xen. Hell.* III.3.1–2.

⁵⁶ Plut. *Agesil.* 3.1 sq.

⁵⁷ Hdt. VI.61–69; cf. HOW AND WELLS, MACAN, AND H. STEIN. *Herodotos*.

The successor to Agis was to be decided by Apollo, but the oracular pronouncement was ambiguous, and its meaning was disputed. A professional and experienced chresmologue named Diopeithes interpreted the oracle in favor of Leotychides. Plutarch describes the seer as the custodian of ancient prophecies, who was regarded as very wise. He quotes the oracle, which suggests that he had more detailed information than Xenophon, who does not, and that therefore his report rests on an early source. Evidently the succession crisis was so acute and the struggle between the two contenders so well known that an extensive record of it existed to which the biographer had access. In the end Lysander's interpretation of the oracle was accepted by the state (the *polis*, as Xenophon puts it, presumably meaning the assembly)⁵⁸. Despite his election, however, the king's position from the very beginning rested on a disputed Delphic pronouncement and so was not completely secure. His kingship appears to have remained somewhat shaky for a while after his accession, for despite his military successes Agesilaos later on had to contend with intrigues and machinations against him. His tenuous hold on the throne is both suggested and explained by the punctilious obedience he showed to the ephors: he worked to win their favor by rising from his seat when ephors visited him. He also worked to win the favor of the *gerousia*, sending newly elected senators a coat and an ox as a mark of honor, and made great efforts in other ways to attract a large following and to rule as a populist king. Plutarch says that the ephors feared his power and fined him because 'he had made his own the citizens who should belong to the state.' If Plutarch is right, Agesilaos had egalitarian views, reformist plans, and perhaps even revolutionary intentions⁵⁹.

All this suggests that Agesilaos may have been implicated in the conspiracy of Cinadon. What Xenophon says about the conspiracy points in the same direction. The succession crisis was closely connected with the plot; Xenophon certainly implies such a connection by reporting both events in immediate succession of each other as a continuous account in the *Hellenica*⁶⁰. There is no overt statement in Xenophon's history of the king's complicity, but this is to be expected from a historian to whom Agesilaos was a hero, whose encomiastic biography he wrote, and whom he would have been reluctant to portray as conspiring with slaves and other members of the lower classes. But what Xenophon says between the lines, so to speak, makes a plausible case for the king's connivance in the conspiracy.

Dublin, Zurich, 1969. Vol. VI *ad loc.*

⁵⁸ Xen. *Hell.* 3.3 sq.

⁵⁹ Xen. *Agesil.* I.18 sq.; 36; VI.4; Plut. *Agesil.* 4.1 sq.; 3; 5.1 sq.; 10.5; 17.1. MITCHELL. Op. cit. P. 127.

⁶⁰ CARTLEDGE. Sparta and Lakonia. P. 234; Xen. *Hell.* III.3.4–11.

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Agesilaos had been king for less than a year, and probably for a rather short time, when the conspiracy came to light. He learned about it while he was engaged in one of the public sacrifices regularly performed by the kings on behalf of the state, in keeping with ancient custom. In the course of the ceremony Agesilaos was told by the attending seer that the gods revealed a terrible plot. The king thereupon offered a second sacrifice, but the seer declared that the signs were even more terrible than before. At the third sacrifice the signs were 'as if we were in the midst of the enemy.' When the two of them finally obtained favorable omens, they did so with great difficulty. This somewhat elliptical and murky account contains several curious features. First, as the sacrifice was public, and was attended by others besides Agesilaos and the seer⁶¹, the seer must have told the king what the omens meant privately and in a low voice audible only to him. This means that no other person present heard him; had others heard him, the conspiracy would have been revealed on the spot, rather than later. Xenophon appears to be saying that the seer was not so much informing Agesilaos about a conspiracy as warning him that it might be revealed, as in fact it was to the ephors five days later. Secondly, the seer, Tisamenus, was one of the conspirators, for he too was arrested eventually⁶². The third feature is the most curious and damning: it is the inaction of Agesilaos. Despite three repeated warnings, and a fourth not wholly satisfactory response, the king failed to take any steps to look into the threatening danger, nor did he, as he could have done at the very least, inform the ephors of what he had learned at the sacrificial ceremony. His behavior suggests that, like his early predecessor, the regent Pausanias, Agesilaos had been a silent partner in a plot involving many members of the underclass, including the helots. Knowing that his succession was disputed and uncertain Agesilaos evidently had been preparing an alternate path to the throne, and after he became king chose not to act against his allies, perhaps because his populist convictions agreed with the aim of Cinadon's conspiracy, which was equal rights for all. In view of all this the seer's words 'we are in the midst of the enemy' become ambiguous; 'the enemy' may have been the other Spartans who were present at the sacrifice.

While this conclusion may be somewhat hypothetical, the reaction of the ephors to the plot, like the inaction of Agesilaos, is a fact adding considerable weight to the possibility of Agesilaos' complicity. Since they did not know the extent of the plot the ephors, when they learned about it from an informer, were careful to conceal their knowledge from others,

⁶¹ Hdt. VI.57.1; a large number of people was also present when the king offered sacrifices in his capacity as general, Xen. *Lac.* 13.4 sq.

⁶² Cf.: ROBAERT A. Le danger hilote? // *Ktema*. 1977. Vol. 2. P. 153 f.; the identity seems correct in view of the definite article with *μάστιγ* at Xen. *Hell.* III.3.11.

including Agesilaos. They did not convene the 'little assembly,' almost certainly the *gerousia*, where Agesilaos would also be present; instead each ephor gathered senators around him wherever he found them to devise countermeasures with them⁶³.

There is a further consideration. A circumstantial but quite plausible case has been made recently that 'Cinadon was the "fall guy" for someone far more powerful than himself, namely Lysander'⁶⁴, who, as already mentioned, at the time of the conspiracy was not only the ally of Agesilaos in the struggle for the succession, but his chief champion and the man who, in effect, made Agesilaos king. If the hypothesis of Cinadon as the 'fall guy' is correct, and it is quite attractive, Lysander may have acted on behalf of Agesilaos and as his agent. Cinadon, then, ultimately may have been the 'fall guy' for Agesilaos himself.

Lysander too, as Plutarch tells us, had been entertaining hopes of reforming the Spartan kingship, and very probably had been looking for allies to help him carry out his designs. Upon capturing Sestos from the Athenians, he expelled its population and gave the city and its territory to the helmsmen and boatswains from the 200 ships under his command to live in and to cultivate. These 400 men and any of the oarsmen who may also have been allowed to settle in Sestos were probably helots, for as Xenophon tells us, in the Spartan fleets the trierarchs and perhaps the marines were Spartan citizens, but the oarsmen were either helots or mercenaries. Here too, it seems, we have an able Spartan commander successful in warfare who also had reformist ambitions at home and therefore tried to attract a helot following with gifts, even as the regent Pausanias had done earlier and Agesilaos was to do later⁶⁵.

In the third century several Spartan kings worked to reform the social and economic structures of the state. Agis IV wished to cancel debts and to redistribute land⁶⁶. The sources report great opposition to his reforms, but whether or not the lower classes, including the helots, were affected by his program is unknown. Perhaps it is at least interesting that, like the regent Pausanias long before him, Agis IV was forced to seek refuge in

⁶³ Xen. *Hell.* III.3.8.

⁶⁴ LAZENBY J.F. *The Conspiracy of Kinadon Reconsidered* // *Athenaeum*. 1997. Vol. 85. P. 438.

⁶⁵ Plut. *Lys.* 14.2; Xen. *Hell.* VII.1.12. See: WELWEI. *Op. cit.* P. 159 f. for evidence and strong arguments for helot oarsmen on other occasions, including the battle at the Arginusae Islands. Lysander's efforts to attain political power in Sparta are studied with great acumen and thoroughness by Frolov: Фролов Э.Д. Из предыстории младшей тирании (Столкновение личности и государства в Спарте на рубеже V–IV столетий до н. э.) // ВДИ. 1972. № 2. С. 22–40.

⁶⁶ CARTLEDGE and SPAWFORTH. *Op. cit.* P. 45 f.; SHIMRON B. *Late Sparta*. Buffalo, N.Y., 1972. P. 19.

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the temple of Athena Chalkioikos. When the other king, Leonidas, was deposed and exiled he was succeeded by Cleombrotus II, who had been made king by the party of Agis. Cleombrotus remained on the throne until the return of Leonidas, when he too, echoing Pausanias, went to the precinct of Poseidon at Taenarum, the traditional place of worship for the helots, to seek asylum there⁶⁷. It is legitimate to ask why he chose Taenarum; the answer may be that the distance from Sparta-town afforded greater safety. Another, perhaps more plausible answer may be that the helots had been involved in the power struggles on the side of the reformers in some way, and that in their precinct Cleombrotus could rely on the helots' services and protection.

Sparta's internal situation in this period differed from what it had been in the fifth century and during much of the fourth. The kings now governed the state, ruled the entire population and wrestled with its problems, not always without some opposition. Still, the fact remains that once again it was the kings who dealt with the helots *en masse* and made an effort to alter their condition, thereby echoing, or perhaps even consciously continuing the efforts of some of their predecessors. Cleomenes III, acting virtually as an absolute ruler, liberated 5,000 helots, whom, however, he charged a fee for their freedom. He also armed 2,000 of them, and may have enfranchised the lot fully, although modern opinion differs on this last point⁶⁸. About a quarter of century later one of his successors, Nabis, not only liberated many helots, he also enfranchised them, and gave them land which had belonged to their former masters. He also inducted them into the army, and even went so far as to give them Spartan women as wives. Nabis did not abolish the institution of helotry, but he evidently completed the reforms begun by Cleomenes III⁶⁹.

The dozen or so royals and their non-royal surrogates and counterparts, the commoners commanding Spartan forces abroad, represent a relatively small number of men in such positions about whom we have information. But they seem enough to suggest that kings and helots stood in a special relationship with each other, especially when both served on campaigns beyond Sparta's borders. This circumstance may explain in part the contradiction that the helots, while kept down at home, gave good and loyal service in war abroad: they were fighting for the king, who claimed their loyalty and to whom the helots in turn owed allegiance. This loyalty, as was suggested above, the helots could transfer to Spartan commoners of extraordinary ability and qualities of leadership.

⁶⁷ Plut. *Agis*. 16.3.

⁶⁸ SHIMRON. Op. cit. P. 44; 50; 95; CHRIMES K.M.T. *Ancient Sparta*. Manchester, 1952. P. 33 f.; 40.

⁶⁹ SHIMRON. Op. cit. P. 86; 89; 90–97; 121; 127; IDEM. *Nabis of Sparta and the Helots* // CPh. 1966. Vol. 61. P. 1–7.

The transfer seems to have been made almost automatically, by men, and especially the veterans among them, to whom obeying orders had become a second nature in their service in the army.

It remains to answer the question, to the extent that the evidence allows, why some Spartan kings found it necessary to involve the helots in their plans. Among the kings discussed above are several of the abler and more ambitious men who set out to play a larger role in the internal political and social affairs of Sparta than the role accorded them by the Lycurgan order. About one half of them are the same royal persons whom some modern scholars place into a superior group, as for instance does Thomas, who rightly concludes that these kings could be successful as statesmen only if they possessed great personal charisma, exceptional powers of leadership, or had proved themselves to be victorious generals; the kings who did not distinguish themselves as military commanders could not succeed as leaders or reformers inside Sparta⁷⁰. The same prerequisite for political power, success in war, surely also had to be met by ambitious commoners such as Lysander.

However, even the ablest and most energetic of the kings faced enormous difficulties in their efforts to achieve their ends of greater domestic political power and authority. There appear to be two chief reasons for this. First, the kings lacked a political and social base among the Spartiate population on which they could rely for help to maintain the monarchy as an institution while trying enact any political and social reforms that they might have had in mind. Nor could they always count on the support of either of the two assemblies. Secondly, they always faced the opposition of the established government.

One might suppose that the political power base of ambitious kings ought to have been the Spartan peers, but it appears that there was a considerable distance separating royals and commoners. In the sphere of religion their divine descent set the kings apart from their subjects. As kings they also stood apart and above the rest socially. Spartan heirs to the throne were not educated in the *agoge*, which also set them apart from their subjects. A distance is visible even in the routine details in the conduct of daily life: although they may have done so, the kings were not required to dine with their subjects in the common messes, and special provisions were in place to take food to their residences when they chose to take

⁷⁰ THOMAS C.G. On the Role of the Spartan Kings // *Historia*. 1974. Bd 23. P. 260, 262 f., 270. Thomas in p. 262 lists the Spartan kings who in her opinion were the more successful in gaining their political ends. Jones (JONES A.H.M. *Sparta*. Cambridge, Mass., 1967. P. 16) has a similar list which generally agrees with Thomas; he adds a list of the leading commoners who in some way affected Spartan policy. About half of the kings named on both lists had the connections and dealings with the helots described in this paper.

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their meals there. This distance between royals and commoners is particularly well illustrated by the contrary case of Agesilaos: the Spartans liked him, and wished to have him as king because, unlike their other kings, he had been reared with them in the *agoge*, and had been trained to obey as well as to command⁷¹.

It is furthermore not clear that the commons were always the political allies of the kings. If we may generalize from the evidence about Agesilaos, even a popular king could not take the allegiance of the populace for granted, but had to work hard and act in an extraordinary and un-Greek manner to win the good will and trust of the Spartans. In an effort to conciliate his enemies Agesilaos did not retaliate against them for the injuries they had done him, on the other hand he connived at the wrong-doing of his friends to keep them on his side; he even made an effort to gain the allegiance of the poorer among his own relatives to whom he distributed one-half of his estates⁷².

In the *gerousia* the kings had no more power than the rest of the senators; they had only one vote each⁷³. The senators used the kings to maintain the political equilibrium, joining the kings to counteract democratic movements, and taking the side of the populace against them to oppose any autocratic tendencies in the kings. For the rest, if we may believe our ancient authorities, the Spartan senate distrusted the power of the kings nearly as much as did the ephors; Plutarch mentions both in the same breath as powerful opponents of the kings⁷⁴.

To understand fully the position of the kings facing such opposition, it may be useful to recollect how often the sources, early and late, mention the dominance of both ephors and *gerousia* and their opposition to the kings. Some pieces of information in the evidence may perhaps not be very important in themselves, but in the aggregate they acquire considerable weight. In ascending order of importance we hear that only the ephors did not rise when a king appeared, that they had the power to summon the kings before them, and that they could interfere in the decisions of a king. They could also fine him, evict him from the country, and declare him an outlaw and execute him without trial. Aristotle calls the ephors the enemies of the kings (*ἐχθροί*) and says that they are so powerful that the kings must carry favor with them: a king was a king in name only; all the power in the state belonged to the ephors⁷⁵. Plutarch asserts that the ephors and the senators had the greatest power in the state and that Lycurgus instituted

⁷¹ Plut. *Agesil.* 3.3.

⁷² Plut. *Agesil.* 5.1 sq.; 4.1.

⁷³ Thuc. I.20.3.

⁷⁴ Plut. *Agesil.* 4.2.

⁷⁵ Thuc. I.131.1; Xen. *Lac.* 15.6; *Agesil.* I.36; Arist. *Pol.* II.9.1271a19–26; 1270b 11–17; Plut. *Lyc.* 5.6; 7.1; *Agesil.* 2.3; *Cleom.* 3.2.

the ephorate and the *gerousia* for the specific purpose of restraining the power of the kings. From the beginning and then from generation to generation the kings were always feuding and wrangling with the ephors and the *gerousia*⁷⁶.

In view of the forces arrayed against them the kings had no choice but to turn to the underprivileged and subject segments of the population, most particularly the helots, the most numerous such class, to seek wider support for their foreign policy plans and domestic programs. The result was the collaboration described above: kings could make common cause with the helots, including the veterans of their campaigns, in an effort to realize their personal political ambitions. The danger that this complicity presented to the civil government of the ephors and the *gerousia* is obvious. Both bodies met it with wariness and suspicion. There is a good chance that ephors accompanied armies in the field not only to guard against personal and political royal misconduct, or royal military and diplomatic incompetence. An additional reason for their oversight was the possibility of royal collaboration with the helots.

Xenophon emphasizes the mistrust when he says that the kings and the ephors exchanged oaths every month. The kings swore to reign in accordance with the established laws, the ephors took an oath to maintain the monarchy in tact if the kings kept their promise⁷⁷. The historian credits Lycurgus with the institution of the exchange, but it may well be that the oaths were exchanged with especial regularity in the fifth and fourth centuries as a precaution against the machinations by the kings. Plutarch quoting Aristotle as his source reports that the ephors declared war against the helots every year. The phrase that he uses, *πόλεμον καταγγέλλειν*, is the technical term for issuing a proscription against someone. It is significant that according to Thucydides the same threat of a proscription (*πόλεμον προαγορεύειν*) was used by the ephors against the regent Pausanias⁷⁸. Plutarch likewise does not inform us whether the annual proscription was ascribed to Lycurgus, or, as is likely, was a practice that was adopted later. He does go on to quote Aristotle as saying that the declaration had the purpose of avoiding the charge of sacrilege and blood pollution whenever helots were killed. Aristotle, however, may have been making an inference from the notorious disappearance of the 2000 helots in Thucydides already mentioned above. One may doubt that declaring war upon them was meant to provide legitimacy for periodic wholesale massacres of capable young helots. Such massacres were clearly against

⁷⁶ Plut. *Agesil.* 4.2.

⁷⁷ Xen. *Lac.* 15.7.

⁷⁸ Plut. *Lyc.* 8.4; Thuc. I.131.1. See the thorough discussion by Parshikov (Паршиков А.Е. Павсаний и политическая борьба в Спарте // ВДИ. 1968. № 1. С. 130 сл.).

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the interests of the Spartans who needed the helots for service in the army, and in any case there is no evidence, apart from the episode in Thucydides, for such mass murders⁷⁹. The declaration as a public enemy clearly was a precautionary measure aimed directly at the helots themselves; but it may at the same time have been directed obliquely against the kings as well, as a way of preventing royal complots. If a king conspired with an enemy of the state, and was caught at it, he became an enemy of the state himself; this is precisely what would have happened to the regent Pausanias, had he not returned. With the declaration of war against the helots in effect, a royal person entering into a conspiracy with them could be dealt with more easily than it had been in the case against the regent Pausanias, whose quasi-execution at the temple of Athena of the Bronze House later embroiled the Spartans in religious and political difficulties.

An ancient tradition of moderate reliability maintains that, like the helots, the Spartan kings too traced their ancestry to the pre-Dorian Bronze Age population. As the evidence for this claim is not ironclad⁸⁰, modern scholarship has either denied the Achaean origin of the Agiad and Eurypontid dynasties outright, or has sought a compromise with the hypothesis that one of the royal houses was pre-Dorian, and the other was not⁸¹. If the

⁷⁹ This is the general conclusion of ROBAERT. *Op. cit.* P. 141–155; cf. p. 150.

⁸⁰ *Hdt.* VI. 51–55; cf.: I.67 sq.; VII.159.

⁸¹ The compromise position is that of MACAN. *Op. cit.* P. 309 f. on *Hdt.* VI.51. Macan has been anticipated by Wachsmuth, cf.: HOW AND WELLS II 1989. P. 82f., who regard the Achaean origin of the kings as ‘a fiction invented to justify the Dorian conquest’. On the whole, however, the evidence seems to support an Achaean descent of the kings; it includes some similar activities shared by the Homeric and Spartan kings. Both were leaders in war, and both had important priestly functions. Apart from the difference of inhumation there are also some parallels between the funeral rites for Homeric heroes and those for Spartan kings as Herodotus describes them, such as the many mourners who defile their bodies at the passing of the king and the transport of the dead man home on a richly decorated bier. Aristotle too seems to regard the Spartan monarchy as having its origin in the distant time of the Homeric heroes, for he draws a parallel between the powers of the Homeric and Spartan kings. *Hom. Il.* XVI. 670–674; XVIII. 22–31; XXII.405–409; XXIV. 715–724; *Hdt.* VI.58.1–3. *Arist. Pol.* III.14.1285a3–14; MICHELL. *Op. cit.* P. 105. It is not necessary to assume that these similarities are due to a copying of practices described in the Homeric sagas; they may well be the product of a common recollection of a distant past transmitted in oral traditions. Eventually, however, the epic began to contribute to the posthumous heroization of the kings. See Snodgrass’ study (SNODGRASS A. *The Archaeology of the Hero* // *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion*. Ed. by R.Buxton. Oxf., 2000. P. 180–190) of the interconnections between cults of heroes in the sagas and cults of heroes who were real persons. Snodgrass adduces the elevation to heroic status after his death of the early Spartan king Teleklos (*Paus.* III.15.10) as an example.

B. Jordan

tradition of an Achaean ancestry of Sparta's kings is not historical, its existence raises the question why it was invented and by whom. The answer may well be that it was invented to explain the collaboration in historical times between kings and helots of which, as we have seen, the evidence, limited though it is, affords a fairly good glimpse. It is impossible to know who the authors and promoters of the tradition were, whether it was an invention of the kings who wished to display themselves to the helots as their natural champions, or of the political adversaries of the kings, who wanted to use it as a weapon against subversive royals, and saw it as a way of justifying strong measures against them. Whatever the truth of any of this, kings and helots appear to have been linked together strongly enough to ascribe a common origin to both. The tradition about this origin was very much alive in the historical period, and so powerful that one of the kings who had particularly close dealings with his helots, Cleomenes I, could retort to the priestess of Athena on the Athenian Acropolis: 'Madam, I am not a Dorian, I am an Achaean'⁸².

ЦАРИ И ИЛОТЫ

Б. Джордан

За последние 20–30 лет появилась целая серия серьезных исследований, в которых рассматриваются как спартанские цари, так и спартанские илоты. Впрочем, вопросы, связанные с происхождением, характером, местом в лакедемонском социуме данных двух категорий обычно дискутируются отдельно друг от друга. В данной статье предпринята попытка собрать материал письменных источников, который дает основание предполагать наличие особой связи между царями и илотами, а также интерпретировать эти свидетельства. Ближайшее и тщательное рассмотрение собранных данных позволило сделать некоторые выводы, которые проливают новый свет не только на взаимоотношения этих двух категорий, но также и на характер царской власти в Спарте и на природу спартанской илотии.

The reminiscence of the Achaean kings in Homer too may have given rise to the deification of Spartan kings; cf.: Hdt. VI.58; Xen. *Lac.* 15.2; 15.9.

⁸² Hdt. V.72.3.